

Studies in Material Thinking, <http://www.materialthinking.org>
 Vol. 6 (December 2011), ISSN 1177-6234, AUT University
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Existential Anguish Inside Architecture: The Interior In Between Encounter and Belonging

Abstract

In the current age of unsettlement, our research is aimed at understanding and possibly incorporating existential anguish into architectural design. Inquiry into the architectural 'Unheimlichkeit' (a reference to Vidler's 'the architectural Uncanny') addresses a paradoxical and disquieting force in architecture that does not intimidate but rather stimulates the growth of human creativity through architecture.

The inquiry into Unheimlichkeit proposes a specific approach towards architectural design and education. Unheimlichkeit complements prevailing values and norms in architecture as preset by society (commodities, light, sight, and so on). The architectural Unheimlichkeit envisages and embodies a 'frictional' design approach that promotes the growth of 'other' values in architecture such as mortality, empathy, trans-disciplinarity and alteration. Simultaneously, we conduct specific pedagogic experiments through a number of Research Design Studios entitled 'Onheimelijk' that are collectively organized with and by students-researchers in the St Lucas School of Architecture.

This article is intended to address a central question: How can Unheimlichkeit consolidate the architectural discipline (as we know it) and yet provoke thinking beyond the discipline. By provoking unfamiliar thoughts on the relationship between art and architecture, we inquire into the possibility of the architectural interior as a 'frictional' vehicle for overcoming existing dualities.

In this article, we address the following issues. First, we will introduce Unheimlichkeit as an existential condition and effect (i.e. anguish) in architecture and the arts. Furthermore we will see that Unheimlichkeit serves as a specific approach and theme in educational practice. Finally, we will describe the interior as a frictional vehicle that both consolidates and expands the architectural discipline, in between materializing and thinking.

Introduction: the paradox of 'Material Thinking'

The term 'Material Thinking' contains a fascinating and tantalizing paradox. Ambiguously enough, it could mean either 'materializing thoughts' or the 'significance of thinking'. This paradoxical twist invites the reader to critically reflect upon the relationship between matter and thinking. We will see that this paradox is just one of the common grounds between architectural 'Unheimlichkeit', or the Architectural Uncanny (Vidler, 1992) and material thinking. In the present article, material thinking deals rather with the possibility of materializing thoughts into a concrete experience through 'unheimliche' values.

Unheimlichkeit as an existential condition and effect through two aspirations

Our inquiry into Unheimlichkeit in architecture is an attempt to approach the profoundly paradoxical nature of our 'Being-In-the-World'. According to Heidegger, we can turn the world into our 'Heim' or home, yet we also are estranged from it as we are fundamentally and unavoidably a 'Being-towards-Death'. In other words, we have (to) become unheimlich. Unheimlichkeit originates in a profound and fundamental uncertainty in dealing with reality.

This paradoxical phenomenon – to be familiar yet estranged – a Freudian credo from his 1919's 'das Unheimliche' (Freud, 1919) may be central to understanding the essence of the object of our research. One can imagine that this uncertain process of making

something 'heimlich' or worldly, and then deliberately abandoning this world (or becoming un-heimlich,) may cause anguish. In this article, we invite the reader to inquire into existential anguish as a creative force in architecture.

While 'Unheimlichkeit' is a central issue in contemporary arts and has been so down through the centuries (think for instance of Rachel Whiteread, Anish Kapoor, Goya, Kafka, ...), it has been strangely absent in architectural discourse. Nevertheless, we can reveal Unheimlichkeit as a frictional and ambiguous phenomenon in architecture: a building can be perceived as familiar and yet also strange and this perception evokes a feeling of Unheimlichkeit. For instance, the hotel, as portrayed in Stanley Kubrick's 'The Shining' – a film rendition of the book by Stephen King – transforms in the wintertime into a pandemonium of murder and hate, parallel to the evil transformation of the main character. Unheimlichkeit as a creative force in architecture relates to two basic human aspirations: the first is the yearning for 'a sense of belonging' to a larger entity (a nation, a family, a person, a house,...). One can belong to a particular place or person and so on. This urge is the expression of a universal desire. As a 'Being-in-the-World', we can thus long for this carefree environment. In other words, upon finding such a place, one can finally belong to a safe and reassuring 'home' to which one always returns: one has become 'heimlich' or homely.

Yet this desire may be called into question by another aspiration: we can yearn for a particular 'sense of encounter'. This urge is rooted in an existential fascination with encountering the unknown i.e. the 'other'. The encounter with the 'other' profoundly calls into question the self-evident character of Heimlichkeit. By encountering the 'other', we may – whether deliberately or not – jeopardize the familiar and comfortable house that we have come to know: it becomes an environment for which to take care. In this sense, we are inevitably a 'Being-towards-Death'.

Perhaps architectural education focuses too one-sidedly on a harmonious 'sense of belonging' by insisting on heimliche forces. One can assume that the primary task of architecture is to create a sense of protection or, in one word, a home. Why then leave the security and safety of this home? Unheimlichkeit identifies this security as illusory: the inquiry deliberately engages with an intriguing world of not knowing, whereby unpredicted possibilities may emerge. Thus, through the encounter with the unheimliche 'other', we are thrown into a 'World-of-Possibilities'. In our research, we ask ourselves how this going back and forth between constructing a home and leaving home affects us. How does it change our way of thinking as it calls into question our preset values? Our research identifies a process that has a frictional yet constructive influence on how we think, make and act. In essence, the research into Unheimlichkeit is thus a constructive endeavour.

Unheimlichkeit as a specific approach and theme in architectural education

We started our research empty-handed in the academic year 2008-2009. What has been the specific approach and initial framework utilized throughout the inquiry? In other words, how have we been working? Through a series of Research Design Studios – the so called 'Onheimelijk' Studios organized from 2008 onwards (Deckers et al., 2009) in the St Lucas School of Architecture – we gradually developed a framework built upon educational practice.



Fig. 1: The first publication following the 'Onheimelijk' Research Studio (Deckers, 2010)

The inquiry focuses on educational practice and does not start with an a priori understanding of *Unheimlichkeit*. The essence of the inquiry lies in the body of work conducted through, with and by students. We investigated how existential anguish can become both a design factor and a leading theme in a Design Studio. We generally focused on the emergence and formation of collective forces generated by the encounter with the 'other'. Parallel to producing an individual design, a student is also asked to perform a collective task 'set in the world', which ultimately becomes more relevant than the individual design. For instance, one of these collective tasks was to organize a temporary interior, such as organizing an exhibition of all student work in a totally unequipped environment such as an abandoned warehouse.

The Studio also aims at combining practice and theory: we anticipated a Research Design Studio in which the student would simultaneously learn to think strategically and act accordingly through the making of a design. This process is conducted by both the student-researchers and teacher-researcher in charge of the Studio. The whole concept of the Studios is geared to monitoring the design process as it occurs. Our focus is upon monitoring and stimulating a creative process in order to obtain unexpected qualities, not a preset final design or a fixed end result.

We also wanted to take distance from familiar settings. The '*Onheimelijkheid*' Research Design Studio explicitly starts from the idea that student-researchers do not belong exclusively to a school environment, but belong to the world. The Studio thus deliberately '*de-familiarizes*' the participants from the school environment for instance by altering neglected interiors located extra muros. Each year, we have built a temporary installation/exhibition outside the school walls.

The Research Design Studio therefore takes architectural education to the streets and thus potentially generates encounters. Architecture, then, may be - or may not be - this mythical and solitary act of designing. Architecture rather takes place and is characterized by our '*Being-in-the-World*'. Yet, simultaneously this '*Being-in-the-World*' is being questioned in the encounter with the 'other'. Thus, there is a tension emerging between our '*Being-in-the-World*' and '*Being-towards-Death*', i.e. the tragic yet necessary distance taken from the world. This paradoxical tension between the present and mortality, between longing and encounter, can be fruitful in architectural education.



Fig. 2: Project by Jonas Van Vliet, 'Eb and Tide House' (Deckers et al., 2009)

Take for instance, the student project by Jonas Van Vliet 'Eb and Tide House' (Deckers et al., 2009). This exemplary project in the research studio illustrates in my view a tragic dimension in architectural design. He designed a house that is subject to the changing of ebb and tide. This design embodies a crossing of two contradictory ideas: a safe and predictable interior that encounters currents of salty water. The

interior arrangements follow the natural rhythm of ebb and tide. By allowing water to enter, the interior continually contracts and expands. These changes transform the experience of the interior into something intense and rich, into architecture. The underlying idea is that by accepting a continuously changing interior, we are able to turn something erratic into a quality.

The tragic dimension could be described as follows: only when the forces of nature are allowed to overtake us, can architecture be possible. Paradoxically, as the interior is infiltrated with water, *Unheimlichkeit*, or something discomfoting kicks in. *Unheimlichkeit* usually occurs when the natural order of things is reversed: natural yet unpredictable elements invade our common sense of security and commodity. Yet this commodity in itself can be questioned: 'Modern commodities threaten the stability of the world' (Taylor, 1998).

This student research project thus constructs 'otherness' through the notion of *Unheimlichkeit*. One can ask: In what way could the outcome of the research with and by students be meaningful for the architectural discipline? In other words: How can *Unheimlichkeit* consolidate the architectural discipline and still provoke thinking beyond the discipline? Perhaps we ought to simultaneously familiarize with the discipline as we know it, and de-familiarize (or estrange) from the discipline by deliberately taking distance.

Consolidation of the architectural discipline through Unheimliche values

First we look at which architectural values potentially belong to *Unheimlichkeit*. Can these unheimliche values consolidate the specificity of the discipline?

Empathy can be described as an unheimliche value, i.e. a desire to 'read' and comprehend somebody else's mind. Through the act of designing, we start to learn to think and to imagine being somebody else. This is an intellectual encounter with the 'other': it is a way to construct 'otherness'. It is as if the architect were able to escape from him or herself in order to embody someone else. Throughout the design process, the architect is able to empathically switch roles: he or she can be a drawing artist, a speaker, a viewer or a listener all at once. 'Designers learn to take on two roles themselves. They learn to switch between viewer and drawer' (Glanville, 2006). Empathy thus consolidates and strengthens the architectural discipline as we know it even though it means altering the self. However, *Unheimlichkeit* deals with a more typical desire to alter spaces. Transforming or altering existing spaces allows us to make a link with architectural interiors. The profound alteration of the interior arguably allows us to encounter the 'other' and thus construct 'otherness'.

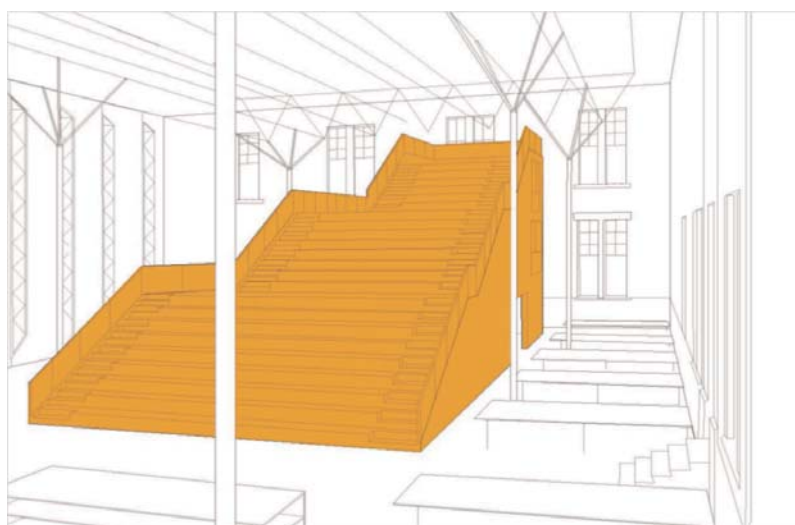


Fig. 3: Interior refurbishment project by MVRDV at the TU Delft – an orange stage is inserted into an existing interior and creates a stark 'before and after' effect.

For instance, a drastic refurbishment of an interior such as by MVRDV profoundly alters the previous state into something unexpected thus leaving us bewildered and in awe. 'This is truly uncanny!' Although profound changes may have altered the space drastically, it is still possible to 'belong' to the altered space again afterwards. The interior may thus be a powerful instrument for creating a stark 'before and after effect.' It holds the key to understanding what alteration in time and space can mean. It becomes really *unheimlich* when these alterations become erratic and fall out of the control of the architect. For instance, the alteration caused by climatic changes. Lawson already claimed that 'weathering' leads to fascinating changes in the interior (Lawson, 2005). Our 'Heim' or world has been profoundly altered – consciously or unconsciously – and then becomes something 'else', (i.e. *unheimlich*).

Another *unheimliche* value potentially addresses the indeterminateness of the design act. In this respect Fredrik Nilsson writes about the fundamental 'optional' faculty of design. 'Designers deal with possible worlds and with opinions about what the environment should be, and any design decision is open to questioning and debate' (Nilsson, 2007). Thus, one might say that in the process of designing, one focuses upon deliberate encounters with in-built uncertainties. The complexity of our current age leaves few certain options. In other words, architecture can 'appear' through the uncertainty of questions rather than through the reassurance of solving a particular design problem. This particular open-endedness of design leaves an intriguing absence and may just generate – not hinder – a 'World-of -Possibilities' through the making of a design.

The consolidation of the discipline through *unheimliche* values tends to confirm architecture as a discipline concerned with the development of autonomy—the development of an own identity— in other words, the Self. However, this may lead to a typical pre-conception that the architectural discipline is exclusively dedicated to materializing spatial desires. From an *unheimliche* point of view, these desires should be open to questioning –and not per se materialized– as they potentially lead to another expansive kind of thinking.

Expansion of the architectural discipline through *Unheimliche* values

We could argue that disciplinary expansion –or the gradual taking distance from the discipline– takes place through a set of *unheimliche* values that push us beyond disciplinary purity. How can architectural *Unheimlichkeit* with its typical values (spatial and temporal alteration, empathy in design) encounter other disciplines? First of all, *Unheimlichkeit* may deal with a profoundly sinister aspect of our life: mortality as a fatal condition that positively guides us toward taking action. The final horizon of 'Being-towards-Death' (Heidegger, 1927) stimulates creativity and generates a 'World-of-Possibilities'. *Unheimlichkeit* gravitates around this mortal notion: the finality of things creates a sense of urgency. It is a horizon and a realm in which both contemplation and action is made possible.

Heidegger's work resonates through in Hans Jonas' reflections on the importance of making artefacts. Jonas considers artefacts as cultural products that essentially distinguish us from animals. According to Hans Jonas' article, 'Werkzeug, Bild und Grab' (Jonas, 1992), mankind has developed three kind of artefacts. First, a grave is an artefact: burying the dead and ritualising the grave cult is a supremely self-reflective act. Secondly, the 'Homo Pictor' started to make artefacts based on images that provide meaning through the representation of other realities. Finally, as a 'Homo Faber', man has successfully mastered the skill of making instruments. In the light of the first artefact –the grave– Jonas speaks of the horizon of death as a 'Möglichkeit', as a possibility towards action, not as a fatal datum.

Thus an intriguing paradox emerges between mortality and the making of a design. Mortality may thus become a vital value that allows us to understand why one designs. The architectural artefact may outlive several generations; however a creative life span is limited to an ending. *Unheimlichkeit* can thus be considered sinister. Alvar Aalto states. 'Form is nothing else but a concentrated wish for everlasting life on earth.' (Pallasmaa & MacKeith, 2005). Artists often stage existential issues in their works of art, but this is less common in architecture. Libeskind, Hedjuk, Llebeus Woods and Aalto are the most noteworthy exceptions to the supposed rule:

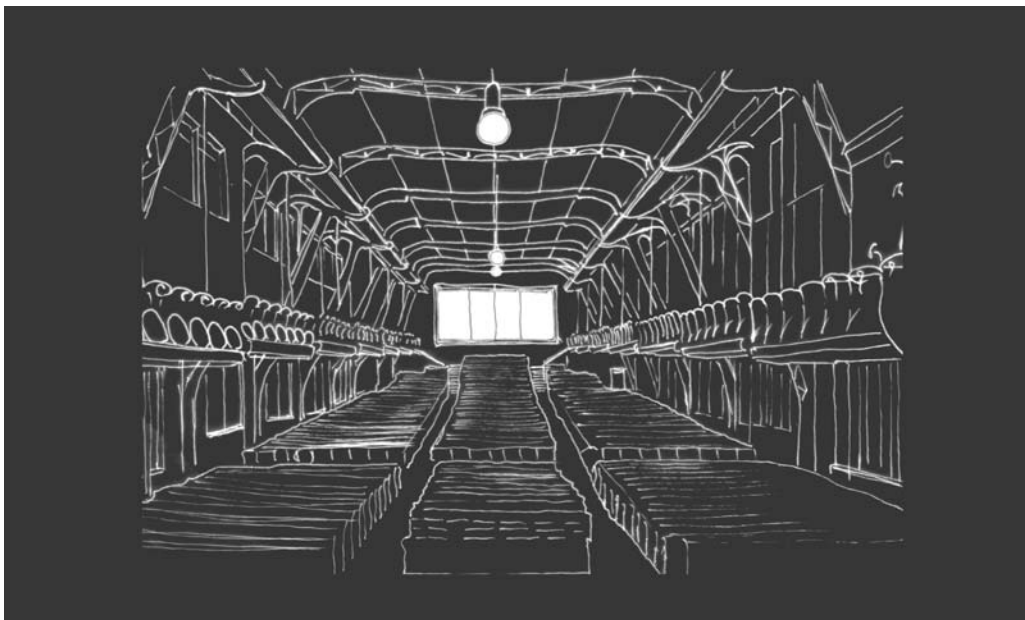
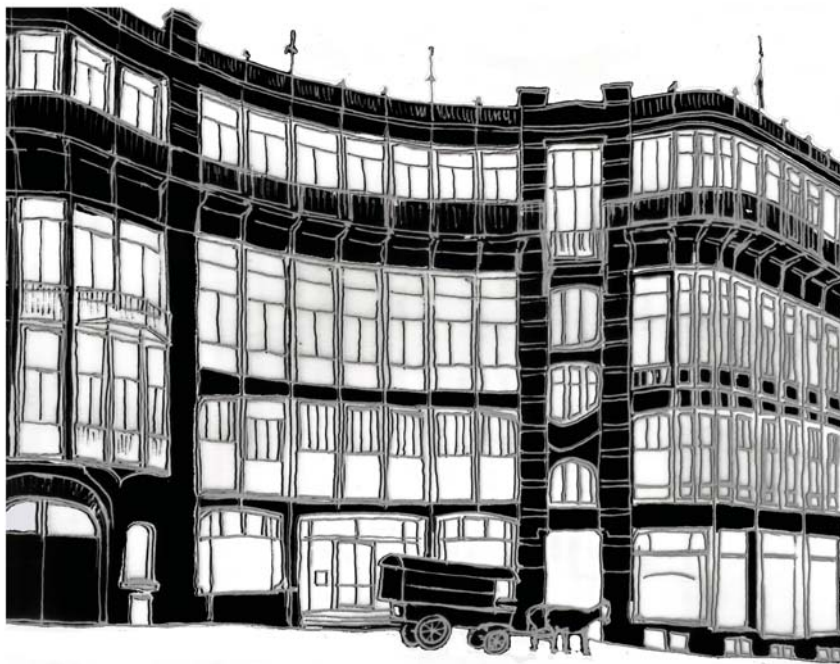
their architectural achievements and inquiries arguably question the tragic condition of man through deliberately evoking unsettling experiences. *Unheimlichkeit* may attribute a meaning to a particular space that goes beyond the familiar and immediately recognizable.



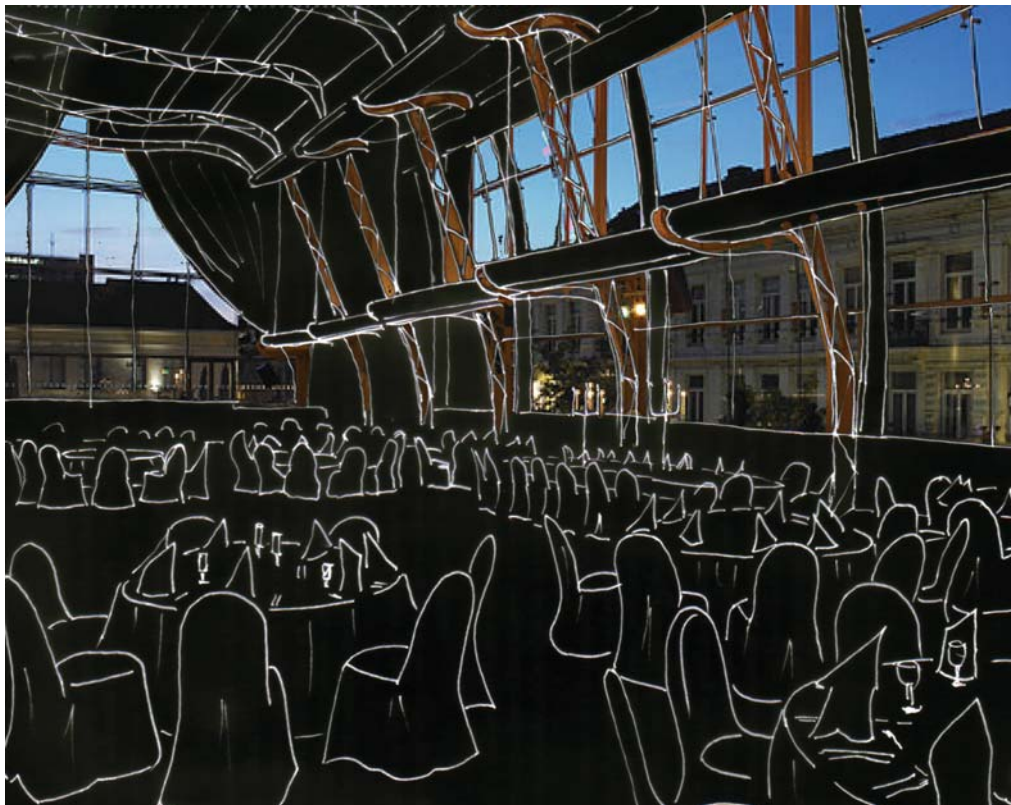
Fig. 4: Photo of *Onheimlijk*, an exhibition held in a derelict building in Ghent, Belgium (Deckers et al., 2009)

During these '*Onheimlijk*' Research Design Studios, we have witnessed this deliberate search for existentialism. The student collective worked and exhibited in places of decay. The uncanny atmosphere of those places stimulated the imagination, and probably much more than did the sterility of the clean gallery spaces. Apparently, there was no need to design a novel space: it was interesting enough to reveal the potential of existing derelict warehouses and then to transform them into – temporary – exhibition spaces.

Architecture can be thought provoking and mind-moving as it questions the commodities of the world such as light, sight, and harmony. *Unheimlichkeit* thus may evoke an element of subversion. Engaging in *unheimlichkeit* as an architectural value, protects man against overprotection and excess of comfort: it urges him to take action in a contemporary world of abundance. This attitude can be traced back to architectural interiors as well. An architectural interior may be difficult to reuse in time, while the building in general is not. For instance, it might be a complicated matter to reuse the interior of the Schröder house successfully. Interior architecture thus may be the discipline by means of which we sense the vulnerability and fragility in the architectural field most urgently. Confronted with the question of reuse, the architectural interior is often condemned to be replaced or demolished after less than a decade. As a particular architectural fashion declines, the interior is usually the first to go. The building stays and becomes something 'else'. The interior – too often the unfortunate half of a Siamese twin – is left behind and loses its '*raison d'être*'. This tragic sense of fragility and loss makes the interior such an exciting research topic.



Figs. 5, 6: The images above indicate the Maison du Peuple in Brussels designed by Horta in 1899, its original exterior (top) and interior (bottom).



Figs. 7, 8: Images indicate the present building replacing the Maison du Peuple demolished in 1965 (top) and the contemporary re-use of the interior in a restaurant in Antwerp (bottom).

A sad example illustrates this better. After demolishing La Maison de Peuple in 1965 in Brussels, a part of the interior was saved and transposed to be 'reused' as part of an interior of a luxurious restaurant in another city, Antwerp 40 years later. However, in this particular example we witness that the artistic qualities of the original beams of

the interior cannot be transposed without damaging the values of Art Nouveau (such as overall consistency of interior and exterior, structural innovations, etc). We see that the beams of the Maison du Peuple have only been used to create a sensational background of drama and decoration: the interior arrangement is meant to honour Art Nouveau and to set an example of proper reuse, but it fails to do so. The building and its interior do not pay tribute to the artistic ideas of Horta. In fact, they distort his legacy by shamelessly aiming at commercial exploitation.

Furthermore, Unheimlichkeit may enable the expansion of the architectural discipline by pushing the boundaries outward in the search for the unfamiliar. Unheimlichkeit thus embraces the discipline with transdisciplinary values that transgress the traditional and disciplinary settings. We understand the notion of 'transdisciplinarity' here in the sense given by Helga Nowotny : 'Transdisciplinarity contributes to joint problem solving ...What is needed in addition to reliable knowledge is socially robust knowledge'. (Nowotny, 2010). During our 'Onheimelijk' Research Design Studio, it became crucial to nurture this transdisciplinary attitude. The decision to involve other disciplines did not arise out of a holistic aspiration to belong to a greater whole, but rather out of the necessity of openness and susceptibility in the effort to encounter the 'other'. Transgressing the disciplinary boundaries also means taking risks.

Unheimlichkeit in architecture finally provokes by 'indulging' in crisis situations and calamities. This provocative feature of Unheimlichkeit returns on many levels. In an architectural practice, a deadline is an artificial and self-induced moment of crisis that finally nourishes an eagerness to come up with a sharp design. To put it polemically, to avoid a design problem is to avoid the possibility of generating architecture. Unheimlichkeit then may be about deliberately searching for risks and crisis, danger and anguish. The architectural design of the Unheimlichkeit flourishes in the context of catastrophe and imminent danger. Studying the life of Alvar Aalto potentially gives us a good idea of what we mean by inserting unpredictability into architecture. Even in the construction phase, he allowed certain kinds of uncertainty to slip into the design. A 'mistake' made by a builder (an element that differs from the original building plans), potentially became for him an opportunity to produce another, adapted and improved design. There is something unheimlich in allowing something unexpected to slip into the building process without damaging the original intentions: in other words, Unheimlichkeit enables us to move in possible – thinkable – worlds.

As an architectural approach, is Unheimlichkeit then exclusively related to immateriality?

In this respect, I would like to cite the renowned architect and critic, Marc Dubois. In a response to an article on Unheimlichkeit published by the author, Dubois claimed: 'Art can be immaterial, buildings cannot'. In an article entitled 'Kunst en Architectuur' ('Art and Architecture') – to be published in February 2012 – Dubois expands on the specific role of art and architecture. He is convinced that Unheimlichkeit does not belong to architecture, though it can only be associated with the fragile and immaterial world of artistic expression. For him, Unheimlichkeit has nothing to do with the 'real' world of buildings. Anguish can only be a theme in architecture, and not a praxis in architecture. However, one can argue that limiting the architectural discipline to the actual standing buildings themselves would be the same as equating Fritz Lang films to a collection of celluloid! Of course, the spectacular interior and exterior of the San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane church in Rome, for example, is made up of matter like any building. However, beyond the material world lies the imagined world or the world of the metaphysical. Meta-physics transcends the physical: it points toward what a collection of matter means for people through time. Arguably, this sense of metaphysical immateriality is equally precious and transcends the material. We can thus encounter Unheimlichkeit in between the material and the immaterial, in between belonging and encounter. For instance, we can think of the 'Stendhal Syndrome' which refers to feelings of dizziness that one can experience when struck by the beauty of a work of art. As one wanders through the interiors of Borromini or Guarini, it is difficult not to feel overwhelmed. The spectator – safely enclosed by baroque matter – finally can but surrender to the sublime and immaterial encounter with the 'other'.

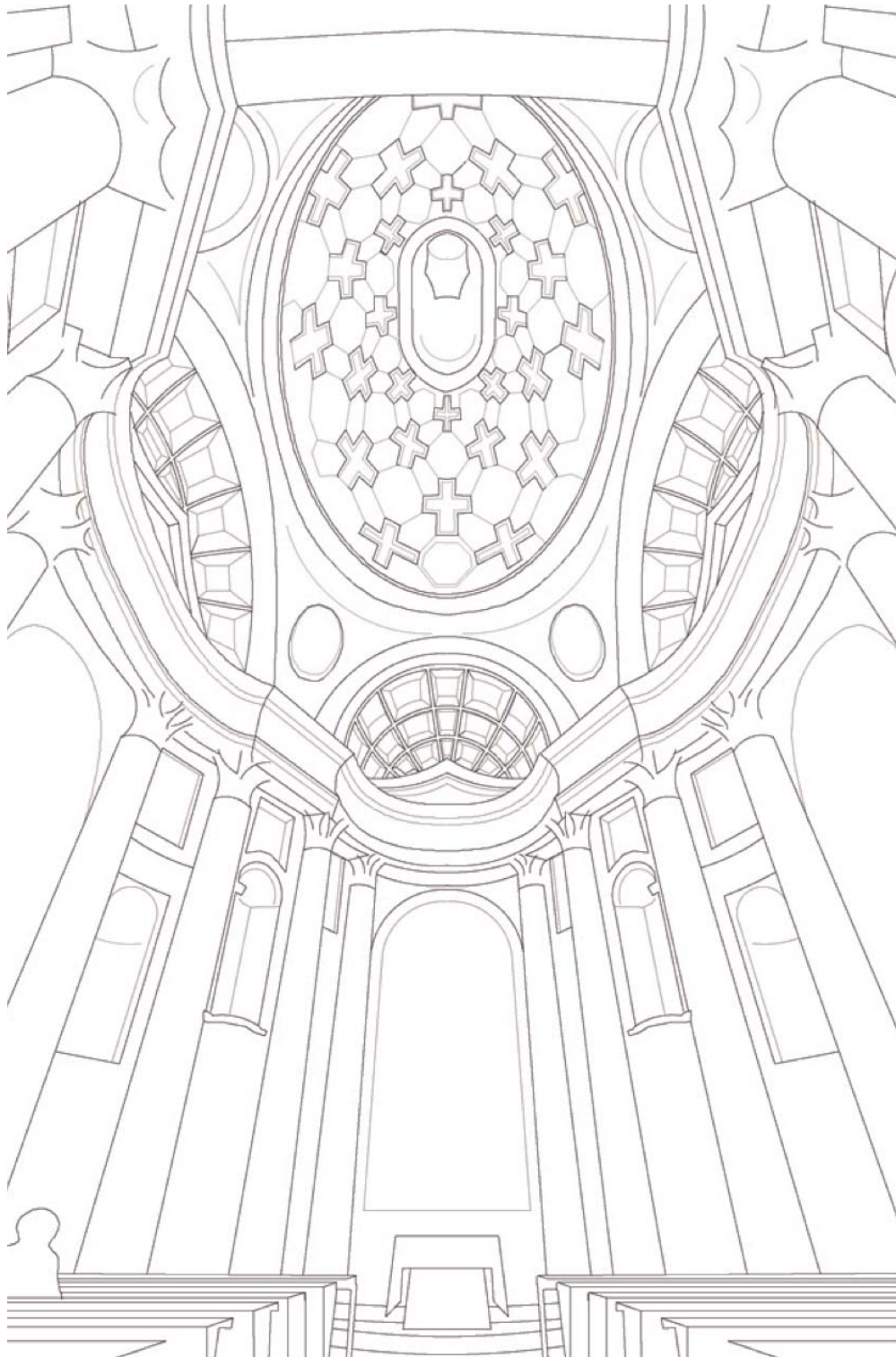


Fig. 9: Drawing of the sublime interior San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, a church building designed by Borromini.

In 'Poetics of Space', Gaston Bachelard points out the relevance of the fictional and immaterial aspects of wandering in space. I myself consider literary documents as realities of the imagination, pure products of the imagination. And why should the actions of the imagination not be as real as those of perception? (Bachelard, 1958). For him, the daydreaming activities have an effect on our perception and conception of architecture. In point of fact, daydreaming, from the very first second, is an entirely constituted state. We do not see it start, and yet it always starts the same way, that is,

it flees the object nearby and right away it is far off, elsewhere, in the space of elsewhere.' All these immaterial experiences of elsewhere bear evidence of the fact that buildings can embody parallel immaterial worlds, existing simultaneously next to and within the material.

Unfortunately, much of contemporary architectural discourse reduces buildings to their 'primal' and material aspects. In so doing, it may consolidate the discipline, but it also potentially impoverishes it by confirming the existing dualities between art – often considered as something exclusively immaterial – and architecture – often considered as something exclusively material. This division may weaken architecture in its confrontation with the contemporary trends of image building and 'branding'.

An alternative can be to develop another way of thinking in architecture through the notion of 'material thinking'. The underlying paradox of material thinking could provide a tool for better comprehending the delicate ambiguities of architecture. Unheimlichkeit in architecture may then be ultimately related to the synthetic activity of interconnecting informal stories with formal realities. In other words, the activity of interconnecting built environments with imaginary ones. Thus the paradoxical formation of 'material thinking' emerges in between fiction and friction, belonging and encounter, matter and thoughts, consolidation and expansion.

Conclusion

We have seen that architectural Unheimlichkeit both specifies and expands the architectural discipline through a set of values: this paradoxical consolidation and expansion makes the effort to categorize this phenomenon an uncomfortable task. Through the lens of a polemic debate, we have described the interior as a frictional vehicle that both consolidates and expands the architectural discipline, in between materializing and thinking.

We belong to a material world with people and their artefacts. In a way, this belonging ensures a 'heimliche' sense of home. Yet in our encounter with 'other' – immaterial – worlds, the safety and comfort of home is called into question: architecture and anguish have become allies in a quest to belong to a particular place and to encounter the 'other'. The paradox of 'Material Thinking' balances between the safe enclosure of belonging and the exposure to this particular encounter. Matter only 'matters' through the emergence of immaterial thoughts, i.e. the existential encounter with the other. Only then can our thinking develop something like 'material thinking'. An all too strong emphasis of buildings and the act of building would arguably lead to a materialistic kind of thinking.

Unheimlichkeit specifies a small yet existential part of the immaterial domain of architecture: it can be considered to be both approach and theme in architecture. The very basis of this Unheimlichkeit may lie in the uncompromising importation of foreign elements into familiar settings. The Unheimlichkeit finds its origin in the acceptance of change, not in protection. When it occurs, we strengthen our resilience in order to enrich the architectural experience. We can appreciate the unheimliche values as we deliberately venture into un-familiar settings (such as architectural decay). We become familiar with these themes and finally bring them back 'home' to our understanding. Nevertheless Unheimlichkeit may not be a typical characteristic of space, but rather a phenomenon that affects the wanderer and the space in between encounter and belonging.

Unheimlichkeit has its origin in the existential state of the world: as we live in an unsettling world, our sense of 'Being-in-the-World' is continuously challenged. We are a 'Being-towards-Death'. The architectural Unheimlichkeit may be capable of bridging the growing gap between the existential and deep artistic images arising out of the world of the arts and the 'here and now' qualities of architecture.

The present article started from the central concern: What is the specificity of the architectural discipline? We acknowledge the importance of disciplinary autonomy. However, a radical concern to keep out foreign and transdisciplinary voices may potentially eclipse other more substantial issues. How can one affect and enrich the

specificity of the architectural discipline in the light of the challenges that threaten our contemporary society?

History teaches that architecture has a unique ability to expand by learning from other disciplines in a quiet and humble way. Since Vitruvius, the supposed role of architecture and architects has been continuously changing and shifted in a response to critique. In our age of global expansion, and in fact throughout all of history, it has been virtually impossible to keep the discipline unspoilt, free and pristine from external forces. In trying to keep things 'pure', architecture runs the risk of finally ending up in an unhealthy, sterile kind of self-indulgence. Unheimlichkeit starts from an acceptance of change and uncertainty, not of protection.

What are the limits of our own certainties and how can we overcome them even if they cause existential anguish? In reducing the meaning of architecture to technical and material commodities, we damage the fragile faculties of architectural experience namely. memory and anticipation. The architectural interior may – or may not be – a medium to question our way of living – here and now – in the light of our own mortality. The whole underlying intention of our research into Unheimlichkeit in architecture is not to lose the specificity of architecture, but rather to treasure architectural experiences by interpreting them as charged with specific values, even if those values might be subversive.

A paradoxical formation of both matter and thinking emerges in the architectural interior. It balances between fiction and friction, belonging and encounter, materiality and thinking, consolidation and expansion, in other words Material Thinking. Speaking in the words of Pallasmaa, as published in 'Encounters': 'We live in worlds in which the material and the mental, the experienced, remembered and imagined completely fuse into each other' (Pallasmaa & MacKeith, 2005).

Acknowledgements

A warm thanks to my family, Fredrik Nilsson, Jo Liekens, Marc Dubois, Richard Sundahl for their generosity, inspiration and support in writing this article.

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